



Ambassador Alan D. Solomont
Dedication Ceremony for 9/11 Memorial Grove
Parque Juan Carlos I, Madrid
September 11, 2011

Altezas Reales, Sra. Ministra de Asuntos Exteriores, Sra. Presidenta de la Comunidad de Madrid, Sr. Alcalde de Madrid, señoras y señores, amigos, bienvenidos.

Welcome everybody. Today, on the tenth anniversary of the September 11 attacks on the United States, we remember the victims those attacks and of acts of terrorism around the world by dedicating a grove of American Oak trees here in the King Juan Carlos the First Park. I welcome their royal highnesses, the Prince and Princess of Asturias and thank them for participating in our ceremony today.

Bienvenidos. Hoy, en el décimo aniversario de los atentados del Once de Septiembre, queremos recordar a todas las víctimas del terrorismo a nivel mundial. Con este motivo, vamos a dedicar una arboleda de robles americanos en este Parque Rey Juan Carlos Primero. Agradezco especialmente la presencia de Sus Altezas Reales los Príncipes de Asturias. Agradezco también la presencia de la Ministra de Asuntos Exteriores y de la Presidenta de la Comunidad de Madrid,.

We planned this event and memorial in collaboration with the office of Mayor Alberto Ruiz Gallardon. I am very grateful to my good friend the Mayor for being present and for making this event possible through his support and the support of his office.

Sin el apoyo de mi amigo, el Alcalde de Madrid Alberto Ruiz Gallardón y el equipo del Ayuntamiento de Madrid, este evento no habría sido posible. Se lo agradezco sinceramente.

I especially want to recognize José Luís de San Pío, whose daughter Silvia San Pío perished along with her American husband in those twin towers, I thank you and I offer the condolences of everyone present to your entire family.

Quisiera dar una especial bienvenida a José Luis San Pío, cuya hija Silvia falleció hace hoy diez años junto a su esposo en las Torres Gemelas. (Y a la madre de un ciudadano americano que perdió la vida en dicho ataque.) Le(s) doy las gracias por venir y le(s) ofrezco el más sincero pésame de parte de todos aquí presentes.

I also want to welcome representatives from those other countries who lost their citizens on that tragic day, and I want to say a special thank you to our Spanish friends attending this commemoration. Gracias y bienvenidos.

Finally I want to recognize my colleagues from the Embassy and all the members of the Embassy family who are here, as well as members of the broader American community in Madrid, thank you all for being with us today.

I will have a few words to say a little later, but the main purpose of today is not only to remember. It is to affirm the resilience of the human spirit and to affirm the value of life. I would like to begin this commemoration by symbolically completing the planting of these trees.

Ofreceré un breve discurso más adelante. Sin embargo, hoy no sólo estamos aquí para recordar sino para enfatizar la capacidad de superación del ser humano e insistir en el valor de la vida. Quisiera dar comienzo a esta conmemoración plantando este último árbol.

I would like to invite their royal highnesses to join me in planting the tree that is standing here next to the memorial plaque.

Good Afternoon. On behalf of my wife Susan and my colleagues at the United States Embassy, I thank everyone who has joined us today for this memorial event, to dedicate a grove of American Oak trees in remembrance of the events of September 11, 2001, and victims of terrorism around the world.

Although this is a memorial event, it need not be solely a solemn occasion. We are here to remember those who died on that day, and also to celebrate their memory.

We celebrate the love they felt for their families. The people trapped in those burning towers, in so many cases, reached out from their offices, and on their cell phones, to tell their families how much they loved them, and to encourage **THEM** to be strong.

We celebrate the bravery of those passengers on Flight 93 who rose up against their attackers and brought that plane down before it could be used to harm others.

We celebrate members of the military who responded as one body to defend our nation under threat, and we thank providence that the attack on the Pentagon occurred in an area under renovation. The losses there are still lamentable, and they numbered nearly 200, but there could have been thousands that were normally in that section of the building.

We celebrate the sacrifice that the firefighters, police and emergency workers made. They poured into New York City from miles around, and they rushed to lower Manhattan into the maelstrom of those burning buildings, fully aware of the danger. They had one goal; to save lives and to help their fellow human beings.

Love, bravery and sacrifice in the service of others. Those are the acts we should remember and celebrate, because those are the values we cherish. They are not only American values; they are universal, human values.

So when we remember, let us also celebrate – that when faced with disaster, when faced with attack, when faced with adversity, men and women who hold these values run to help. They are a part of resilient communities who come together to react, to protect and to rebuild.

It is a sign of what is best in our nations that when trouble strikes, people respond. They help each other. They bring their skills and their will and their strength to bear on a problem, and they strive to overcome.

Afterward there needs to be healing, whether it be a terrorist attack, a natural disaster or a personal tragedy.

And after the physical wounds have healed, after the rubble is cleared and the rail lines and buildings are rebuilt, people still need to understand what it meant to them and what they can do and should do to move forward.

People, and communities and nations with resilience do move forward – that is what America has done and that is what Spain has done.

On 9/11, our country was shaken by a horrible reality, that we are vulnerable to violent extremism and terrorist attacks. We are not insulated, and we are one of many peaceful countries which have sadly suffered attacks on their own soil, as have Spain, France, the United Kingdom, Morocco, Indonesia, Japan, Israel, India, Ireland, and the list goes on.

One thing we learned from 9/11 was that we needed to improve our homeland security, but we resolved not to allow terrorists to change the way we live or undermine our democracy and its values.

These are values we share with Spain, a belief in democracy, human rights and respect for cultural and religious differences. We cannot be forced to discriminate against people based on where they come from, the color of their skin or how they choose to worship.

We judge people on who they are and what they do. As the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, we strive to be “a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character...” In the United States, we have adapted, and we have innovated, and we have found ways to keep our communities safe, while keeping the fabric of our society intact. That is what the people of Spain have done, and that is worth celebrating, too.

There is a truth we have learned from all of this. Terrorists do not get their way. Violent extremists do not win people to their side.

Men and women of peace have accomplished great changes in our times. Mahatma Gandhi, Nelson Mandela and Martin Luther King, Jr. are names that will be revered for all times, while those who choose terror will see their goals thwarted and will be forgotten by history or reviled.

The peaceful demonstrations of the Arab Spring have, in a few short months, done more to transform the governments of that region, and to offer hope and freedom to its people, than decades of Al Qaeda-inspired violence.

We are witness today to how much more power is created by inspiring people with hope than by goading them with fear. That is a lesson worth celebrating.

On this day, in ceremonies like this one all around the world, people are dedicating memorial groves and other community spaces to the memory of 9/11. To date, 599 sites have been created to honor the memory of those 2,977 people, from over 90 countries, who died in the attacks on September 11, 2001.

Already there are 11 sites outside of the United States, in France, the UK, Japan, Israel and Australia. These are groves, parks, forests and community gardens, places where people can come together to build something for the future, without losing sight of the past.

Memorials like this grove of oak trees are affirmations of life and community. These trees will grow and flourish in the City of Madrid, in the Kingdom of Spain, as we trust the relationship between our countries will continue to grow and flourish.

A grove of trees, like a community, is alive and dynamic. These ten American Oak trees are pioneers. They are establishing a new community, putting down roots in Spanish soil as so many Americans have done before. If they are as happy

and do half as well as the Americans gathered here, they will become mighty oak trees indeed.

To close, I would like us to observe a moment of silence, to remember all the innocent victims of terrorism, not only on 9/11, but on March 11, 2004, and on all the occasions when acts of hatred and terror were perpetrated on innocent people. We will not forget the victims, nor the lessons they left behind.

That concludes our ceremony. Thank you again for sharing with us the dedication of this memorial grove and the tenth anniversary of 9/11.